(b) if so,the details thereof; and

(c) the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES AND MINERALS (PROF. RITA VERMA): (a) to (c) The Committee on Integrated Coal Policy had, in their report, observed, inter alia, that the gap between demand and supply of coal at the end of IX and X Plan periods would be substantial. The Committee concluded that the demand-supply mismatch for coal in the country would become more serious unless new policy measures are vigorously pursued. Keeping inview the observations of the Committee, a proposal for introduction of a Bill in the Parliament of amendments to the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973 to allow the Indian Companies to do non-captive coal mining was submitted to the Government on 4.2.99. The proposal was approved by the government on 17.2.99. However, before the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, 1999 could be introduced in the Parliament, the 12th Lok Sabha was disolved. The matter is being considered de-novo.

Revival Of ECL

253. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:
SHRI NILOTPAL BASU:

Will the Minister of MINES AND MINERALS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL) has been referred to BIFR;

(b) if so, the present revival status of ECL;

(c) whether ECL Board's decision to close sixty-four mines has been rescinded; and

(d) if not, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES AND MINERALS (PROF. RITA VERMA) :(a) to (d) In 1997-98 and 1998-99, the loss of ECL amounted to Rs. 541.89 crores and Rs. 472.47 crores respectively. On account of continuous losses for two

decades, the ECL's equity has been fully eroded and therefore in pursuance of the statutory provisions in the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985, ECL had no other option but to refer itself to the BIFR on 17.11.99.

The resolution passed by the Board of Directors of ECL in their meeting held on 24.10.98 for closure of highly loss-making 64 mines of the company has not yet been implemented. Several milder opinions for revival of ECL have been offered to the trade unions who have not accepted any one of them. The last of the revival packages including early retirement of 22,000 employees above 55 years of age under an arrangement similar to the Voluntary Retirement Scheme has also been turned down by the trade unions. No package for revival of ECL can be implemented without a reasonable extent of downsizing the manpower of the company.

Casual workers in MCL

254. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of state for MINES AND MINERALS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of causal workers in different coal fields under Mahanadi Coal Fields Ltd.,

(b) since when they are working as casual workers;

(c) whether Government have any proposal to make them regular; and

(d) if so, the steps taken in that direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES AND MINERALS (PROF. RITA VERMA): (a) As reported by Coal India Limited, no casual worker has been employed in the coalfields under Mahanadi Coalfields Limited.

(b) to (d) Do not arise in view of reply given to part (a) above

Jobs for land losers under MCL

255. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of State for MINES AND MINERALS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that Mahanadi Coal Fields Ltd. stopped giving job to the land losers under its various coal fields;